

# INFORMATION

DISCUSSION PAPER HIGHLIGHTS

## CANADIAN ARCTIC MARINE CONSERVATION STRATEGY

The marine waters of the Canadian Arctic are vast and vary significantly in their physical and biological characteristics. They form a contiguous part of a larger circumpolar ocean covering the marine areas of Alaska, the Soviet Union and Greenland. Hunting, trapping, and fishing continue to be important sources of food and income in all communities in the region. These activities not only provide the maintenance of a high protein country food diet but are equally important to the cultural and social survival of the Inuit.

The area is also valued for the aesthetic quality of the Arctic seas, the growing northern tourism industry, the increased interest in the commercialization of renewable resource harvesting, the national interest in the exploration for and development of non-renewable resources, and marine shipping. Finally, the Arctic marine waters provide a focus for sovereignty and northern defense issues.

### The Need for an Arctic Marine Conservation Strategy (AMCS)

The priority need for a conservation strategy in the Arctic Sea has been recognized for some time. While elements of a policy exist, the Government of Canada does not have a comprehensive conservation strategy for the North. The Task Force Report on Northern Conservation released in 1984, like the earlier World Conservation Strategy, advocated conservation planning and made numerous recommendations towards achieving a balance between conservation and development. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans lead in the development of the Arctic marine conservation strategy is a direct consequence of the Task Force recommendations.

The purpose of developing an Arctic Marine Conservation Strategy is to achieve consensus on the optimal use of natural resources and promote development patterns that are sustainable. The idea is to plan now for the present and future use of Arctic marine resources by the integration of conservation practices with resource uses.

### Department of Fisheries and Oceans Role in AMCS

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has assumed the role of coordinator and advocate in the cooperative development, through consultation and consensus, of a comprehensive policy to conserve and manage the Arctic Ocean.

A public discussion paper, drafted through consultations with various organizations and agencies with an interest in the Arctic, has been released for public comment. It is summarized below. It is the intention of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to continue to seek views of a wide variety of people and organizations on the contents of the discussion paper.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans will monitor the implementation of the AMCS, once it has begun, to ensure that the responsible groups are undertaking the necessary actions and a record is kept of what happens to stocks of resources, to the environment, and to people as the actions are put into effect. Department of Fisheries and Oceans will report annually on this information to an AMCS Steering Committee comprising senior representatives of the Native, nongovernmental and governmental organizations with interests in Arctic marine conservation. In addition to ensuring that the AMCS is implemented properly, it is necessary to ensure periodically that the AMCS is achieving its objectives. This requires an audit procedure which would culminate in a report to the Steering

Committee every five years outlining whether goals are being achieved, assessing the status of the renewable resources and the quality of the marine environment, and identifying any problems encountered in the Arctic marine environment. The Steering Committee would act to resolve any issues identified through the monitoring and audit process.

The AMCS and its associated action plans must evolve over time and should be modified whenever necessary. This could occur when new knowledge becomes available, through the monitoring or audit processes, or as a result of other developments. Again, Department of Fisheries and Oceans will continue to lead in amending the AMCS on the basis of information from other organizations with responsibilities for its implementation.

### The Strategy

The Arctic Marine Conservation Strategy provides a framework for the conservation and management of Arctic marine ecosystems, to ensure the quality of the marine environment, and to conserve the renewable resources which are an integral component of it. The intent is to provide for an integrated regime which will allow the sustained consumptive and non-consumptive use of renewable resources, and the development of nonrenewable resources in harmony with that of renewable resources. The AMCS provides the overall framework within which Arctic marine resources should be managed but does not include, for example, species-specific management plans or a detailed system of protected areas. These detailed action plans will be developed to implement the management objectives of the AMCS.

### What does the Strategy Say?

The stated purpose of the Arctic Marine Conservation Strategy is "to ensure the future health and well-being of Arctic marine ecosystems, thereby enabling Canada to fulfill its national and international responsibilities in the Arctic and provide for sustained utilization of Arctic marine resources, in particular, use by Arctic peoples." The Strategy outlines 10 guiding principles which will provide objective statements against which the implementation of the strategy can be measured.

### Implementation Strategies

The discussion paper outlines six strategies which

will provide a basis for future action plans.

#### 1. Science

The AMCS recognizes that scientific knowledge of the Arctic resources and environment are essential to the development of resource management policies and informed decision-making. The planning and development of scientific information should incorporate the knowledge and viewpoints of northern Native peoples.

#### 2. Shared Management Processes

Shared management is considered a prerequisite for conservation and effective management in the Arctic. The Strategy calls for the establishment of cooperative management structures and processes based on shared responsibility between governments, Arctic people, and other stakeholders, for making decisions about the use of renewable and nonrenewable resources.

#### 3. Integrated Resource Planning and Management

The AMCS supports the development of an integrated regime which would reconcile the differences in objectives between resource users and between the various resource sectors. The cooperation of managers and legislators with the involvement of natural resource users is critical for effective implementation of the AMCS. The regime should ensure the present and future use of renewable resources with due consideration given to their economic, social, and cultural values, particularly to Arctic peoples. The regime should also recognize the benefits for all Canadians, including Arctic peoples, from nonrenewable resource development. Terms and conditions will be established through planning and environmental impact assessment, to allow for nonrenewable resource development but also minimize adverse effects on the Arctic marine ecosystem.

#### 4. Marine Environmental Quality

It is important to ensure that industry and community development in the Arctic and developments outside of the Arctic region do not unacceptably affect the quality of the Arctic marine environment. In some cases, areas will require special protection to maintain natural conditions or preserve certain features for cultural, scientific, educational, aesthetic, recreational or biological purposes. The establishment of a system of protected areas can best be accomplished as a component of an integrated resource management system.

#### 5. Public Knowledge

The AMCS advocates the development of a communication system to allow for the exchange of information and to promote understanding of the Arctic marine ecosystem and its importance to Canada. Awareness of the benefits of marine conservation and its relevance to everyday concerns enables policy makers, industrial proponents and the general public to see the need to achieve conservation objectives. The AMCS also encourages the sustainable use and management of renewable resources. Management will be most effective if it involves the resource users at the community level. If this is to happen, relevant education and training programs must be provided in a manner that is culturally acceptable to the trainee.

#### 6. International Cooperation

The Canadian Arctic marine waters and its resources can be adversely affected by air and water pollution outside of Canada's jurisdictional boundaries. Migratory species which spend only part of their seasonal lifespan in Canada, may also be exploited by peoples from other countries. The AMCS encourages the development of a circumpolar conservation strategy for all Arctic marine waters. Bilateral management and research initiatives are also important in ensuring the sustainable use of renewable resources.

### Where Would the Policy Apply?

The Arctic Marine Conservation Strategy applies to sea waters north of the Strait of Belle Isle, west of the boundary between Canada and Greenland and east of the northward extension of the boundary between Alaska and the Yukon. It includes Hudson and James Bays.

### Other Policy Issues

The North is undergoing an evolutionary process as a consequence of Native land claims in Yukon, Northwest Territories, Quebec and Labrador; the division of the Northwest Territories; and political development in both the Yukon and Northwest Territories. The resolution of these issues will greatly affect and direct northern management and conservation. The AMCS principles recognize the particular rights of the Inuit and their special responsibilities for the management and use of the Arctic marine resources. The nature and extent of these rights are being defined through ongoing constitutional and Native claims negotiations. The

AMCS calls for their involvement now in decisions relating to the management and conservation of arctic resources.

In addition the Government of the Northwest Territories, the Yukon Government, and the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) are preparing conservation strategies. The AMCS will be closely linked with the Territorial Strategies and the ICC's Arctic Regional Conservation Strategy. Collectively these strategies will form components of a comprehensive northern Conservation Strategy for Canada and, with international cooperation, become part of a circumpolar conservation strategy.

### Do You Wish to Comment?

Interested persons, groups and institutions are invited to provide constructive criticism on the comprehensive policy discussion paper that has been prepared by the Department. Copies of the complete paper may be obtained by writing to:

**Director  
Arctic and Inland Fisheries  
Department of Fisheries and Oceans  
200 Kent Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0E6**

Copies are also available from the department's regional offices. Please specify if you require a copy in French, English or Inuktitut. Written comments may be forwarded directly to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans in Ottawa. In addition, views may be made known directly to officials at one of the regional meetings to be arranged by the Department during the winter of 1987/88. Final deadline for the receipt of comments is May 31, 1988.

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